

## Q&As on New 4C Code of Conduct (v.2.0)

### 1) Why did the 4C Association decide to revise its Code of Conduct?

Since its first revision in 2009, the 4C Code of Conduct has significantly broadened its scope. By the end of 2014, it had reached more than 415,000 farmers and 1,1 million workers in 24 producing countries. Their cumulative production reached 41 million coffee bags of 4C Compliant Coffee in 2014. It was this rapid growth, coupled with the experiences and learnings gathered through the feedback of 4C Units and Members, reports by external evaluators and the evolution of voluntary sustainability standards' role in global markets which triggered the revision process in 2013.

The revision also followed the Standard-Setting procedures of the 4C Association, which defines the proceeding for the regular revision of the Code every five years. These procedures are in line with the recommendations and [requirements of the ISEAL Alliance for credible standard systems](#), of which the 4C Association is a full member.

### 2) Who participated in the revision process and how was the revision conducted?

The 4C Association began the revision in 2013 with a survey to all members in order to assess their needs. The formal revision process took place in 2014 with two consultation rounds, gathering hundreds of participants in 22 workshops around the world.

During the first consultation round, from March to May 2014 (72 days), 15 workshops were held in 7 countries (Honduras, Vietnam, Kenya, Brazil, Indonesia, Uganda and Colombia). During the second round in October 2014 (30 days), 7 workshops were held in 6 countries (Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, Kenya, El Salvador and Uganda).

In total, 224 organizations took part in the consultation process including producers, traders, industry, civil society, governmental organizations, academia, research institutions and verifiers.

### 3) Who oversaw the consultation process?

The Technical Committee is responsible for overseeing and guiding the Code revision process. It consists of six experts, representing the tri-partite membership structure of the 4C Association, and a Chairperson. You can see the Committee's composition [by clicking here](#). The Technical Committee guides the entire Code revision process, including the review of the different drafts and proposals and provides a recommendation for approval to the 4C Council, the association's strategic decision-making body which is elected by the General Assembly. For more information on the governance of the 4C Association, [click here](#).

### 4) Was the new Code of Conduct tested in the field before its approval?

Yes, it was. The second draft of the Code was tested on the ground through mock audits. During the mock audits, a verifier and an implementing Unit brought the draft into play to test its feasibility and verifiability. Field tests were conducted with the support of 4C Units in Uganda, Brazil, Vietnam and Honduras.

## 5) How was the new Code approved?

Before each public consultation a draft was discussed and approved by the Technical Committee and endorsed by the Council. Following each consultation round, feedback was collated and analysed and wherever a lack of consensus was identified more research was done in order to present alternative options for the Technical Committee to decide. Following the two public consultation rounds and the field tests, the revised Code was approved in December 2014 [by the 4C Council](#), the strategic and political decision-making organ of the 4C Association. The approval was based on a recommendation made by the Technical Committee.

## 6) What are the main changes?

The principal changes focus on strengthening the inclusiveness and the entry-level character of the Code, improving its applicability on the ground and enhancing clarity and consistency. Producers working with the new Code will benefit from:

1. **Emphasis on Farming as a Business.** The new Code helps farmers to make better business out of their coffee production by introducing profitability and productivity principles (Farming as a Business) and focusing records on costs and income. This will help to improve the livelihoods of the participating communities.
2. **Changes to better address small holder producers.** The order of the Code has been changed; it now opens with the economic dimension, to better recognize what is most important for farmers. It also refers specifically to small holders to make it more relevant for the majority of producers and improve understanding in general.
3. **An improved approach to Pesticides:** The new Pesticides List is fully aligned with those of other sustainability standards and focuses on the pesticides which are relevant to and used by coffee farmers. The new Code ensures that at least a minimum level of personal protection is maintained when handling pesticides and enhances the internal knowledge on pesticide use and the guidance on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) at 4C Unit level.
4. **Merge of documents and more concrete and explicit requirements.** The requirements applicable to 4C Units previously found in different documents are now all available in the Code. Terminology has also been improved making it more concrete and explicit, enhancing clarity on what is intended.

For a detailed list of changes, please check the document [\*Synopsis of Main Changes\*](#).

## **5) Does the Revised Code imply increases in workloads for the 4C Units?**

The changes in the revised Code are aimed at providing more guidance and clarity on what exactly is expected in the implementation process. In some cases, there is a reduction in the amount of documentation work for the 4C Units and more flexibility to adapt to small holder realities. A clear finding during the revision process was that, particularly for small holder farmers, the requirement to keep detailed records posed a major burden in terms of time and workload. Consequently, this challenge has been addressed in the new Code, while still making sure that they are taking the necessary actions to comply with the Code and improve their practices over time.

## **6) Does the Revised Code remain an entry-level standard?**

Yes, it does. The Code has been revised to foster its inclusiveness and to better reach out to the large number of producers, especially small holders, who are currently not participating in the market for sustainably produced coffee. During the revision process, the realities and limitations of small holder farmers were analysed and taken into account and principles were adjusted accordingly (see list of changes on the [\*Synopsis of Main Changes\*](#)).

## **7) How does the revised Code relate to other sustainability standards?**

One of the aims of the revision process was to improve alignment between the 4C Code and those certification standards for which it aims to be a stepping up tool. Certification standards such as UTZ Certified, Sustainable Agriculture Network and Fairtrade International are members of the 4C Association and were actively involved in the revision process to ensure that the 4C Code provides a solid basis for producers to step up to their certifications. A good example are the changes introduced in the Red List of Pesticides, for which compliance is expected after 3 years. The Red List was more comprehensive than that of any other voluntary certification sustainability standard, creating a noticeable lack of alignment and creating a barrier for conventional coffee producers. Therefore the list was revised to make it much more focused. Several coffee relevant pesticides are now included in the Yellow List to acknowledge the fact that farmers need to progressively improve their practices over time.

## **8) Why is an entry-level standard needed (when there are advanced sustainability certification standards)?**

An entry-level standard provides unique benefits for small scale, unorganized coffee farmers who are not participating in the market for sustainably produced coffee, that is, the great majority of the world producers. For them, the 4C entry-level standards offers:

- An effective tool to take the first steps in their sustainability journey and reap the benefits from applying good agricultural and management practices;
- Provision of trainings, capacity building and access to information by participating in a 4C Unit;

- The opportunity to be part of an integrated supply chain.

For final buyers, an entry-level sustainability standard is a unique tool to meet their sustainability goals while remaining flexible, being able to use 4C Compliant Coffee across their entire products range. Moreover, it gives them access to a large supply of verified coffee of diverse qualities and origins. This enables them to keep the consistency of their blends while at the same time meeting their sustainability commitments.

### **9) How does the new Code relate to the benchmarking agreements the 4C Association has with other standards?**

In 2008, the 4C Association entered into a benchmarking agreement with the Rainforest Alliance so that producer groups already certified under the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) standard could receive a 4C License without going through the 4C verification process. Currently two additional projects are underway, involving benchmarking agreements with Fairtrade International and Certifica Minas in the first half of 2015. You can read more [about these projects here](#).

The benchmarking agreements will need to be slightly updated based on the changes introduced to the Code. 4C Units will be timely informed about any changes in the course of the transition period to the new Code.

### **10) As of when is the new version (2015) valid and until when is the former version (2009/10) still applicable?**

The revised version v2.0 of the 4C Code of Conduct is valid from July 1st 2015 onwards. The previous version v1.3 will remain valid in parallel until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016. For 4C Units starting their verification on or after July 1st 2016, version 2.0 will be mandatory with all applicable requirements.

**Still have questions?** Please contact Juan Isaza, 4C Standards Manager, at: +49 228 850 50 11 or by e-mail: [juan.isaza@4c-coffeeassociation.org](mailto:juan.isaza@4c-coffeeassociation.org).

We also welcome any suggestions for improving the Q&As on this page. Please send them by email at: [communication@4c-coffeeassociation.org](mailto:communication@4c-coffeeassociation.org)